



File Code: 2810
Date: June 6, 2017

Dear Interested Party,

The Juneau Ranger District of the USDA Forest Service has received a five-year surface exploration plan for Coeur Alaska's Kensington Gold Mine (KGM). I am inviting your participation in the analysis of the proposed 2018-2022 Surface Exploration Plan of Operations, which is being prepared and developed through an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Your participation in identifying issues, concerns, or opportunities within the scope of this project will help inform the development of mitigations and alternatives within the EA. The participation of interested persons, state and local governments, and Native American tribes and tribal corporations is encouraged at this time and throughout the NEPA process.

Proposed activities include surface exploration via core drilling, soil sampling, geophysical surveys (ground and airborne), and geologic mapping within the Kensington Mine land package, which consists of two contiguous mineral claim groups controlled by Coeur Alaska. These groups consist of a combination of federal patented and unpatented lode mining and mill site claims, as well as 43 state of Alaska claims. In total, the land package consists of approximately 14,000 acres. Within the land package, smaller areas of interest (AOI) totaling approximately 7,000 acres have been identified as potential target areas for surface exploration. Details of the proposal are located on the Project Website:

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=51870.

The project is located approximately 45 miles northwest of Juneau, AK, within the Juneau-Skagway Icefield Inventoried Roadless Area (#301). No roads will be constructed during this activity. The proposed project is consistent with the 2016 Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Land Use Designations (LUD) within the project area are Modified Landscape, Remote Recreation, Old Growth, and LUD 2, all of which are open to mineral entry.

The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, provides the public right to identify and extract locatable mineral resources from public lands open to mineral entry. The Kensington Gold Mine, operated by Coeur Alaska, is an underground gold mine that has been operating continuously since 2010, though the area has been mined intermittently since the late 19th century. The mine employs approximately 300 personnel from local communities and produces close to 2000 tons of ore per day. As known mineral resources at the mine are extracted, it becomes necessary to locate and identify new mineral resources through surface exploration, which typically targets areas that are too far afield to be explored via underground drilling. Since 2012, the Forest Service has conducted annual analyses of Coeur Alaska's KGM surface exploration work plans through Categorical Exclusions (CE) within the NEPA process. The Forest Service is implementing a shift from an annual authorization to a five-year authorization to gain efficiencies in permitting and to explore cumulative effects related to the project. As a result, the



Forest Service will consider Coeur Alaska's 2018-2022 Surface Exploration Plan of Operations through an EA.

The purpose of this project analysis is to minimize adverse environmental impacts on resources by regulating the functions, work, and activities connected with the proposed plan submitted by Coeur Alaska for mineral exploration activities on National Forest System lands. The need for the Forest Service to take this action is to comply with 36 CFR 228.5, which describes the procedure for responding to a proposed Plan of Operations, and to ensure that operations are conducted in a manner that minimizes environmental impacts on surface resources (36 CFR 228.8).

This project implements the Forest Plan and is subject to pre-decisional administrative review procedures outlined in 36 CFR 218.7 parts (a) and (b). The objection process will provide opportunity to comment after the final EA document and draft Decision Notice (DN) are made available and before the final decision is made (36 CFR 218.7 (c)). In order to be eligible to file an objection, specific written comments related to this project must be submitted during scoping or during any other public comment period that is specifically identified in this EA (36 CFR 218.5). Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements for eligibility as an individual. Objections received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only. Names and addresses of those who comment and/or file objections will become part of the public record. For more information on how the objection process works, contact the Tongass Minerals Group (details below) or read the regulations under 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B at: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-03-27/pdf/2013-06857.pdf>

We always accept comments, but in order to be eligible to file an objection, your comments for this scoping period must be received by July 10, 2017. Comments may be submitted via email, fax, or U.S. Mail. If you prefer email, please send comments to comments-alaska-tongass-juneau@fs.fed.us with 2018-2022 Coeur Alaska Surface Exploration in the subject line. Send faxes to 907-586-8808. To submit comments by U.S. Mail, please address letters to

Tongass Minerals Group
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801

Your response to this scoping period will ensure that you receive the EA and draft DN. You may also request to receive project updates by subscribing on the Project Website (under the "Get Connected" tab). A copy of the Final EA and draft DN is scheduled for distribution in November 2017. If you have any further questions, please contact Curtis Caton (P: 907-789-6273, E: curtislcaton@fs.fed.us) or Edward Gazzetti (P: 907-789-6276, E: egazzetti@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,



BRAD ORR
District Ranger